DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 986 SP 022 845

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TITLE Challenges of the Twenty-First Century for Latin American Education.
PUB DATE Jul 83
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (30th, Washington, DC, July 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; Access to Education; Educational Administration; Educationally Disadvantaged; *Educational Opportunities; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Illiteracy; *Latin Americans; *Political Influences; *Relevance (Education); Social Change; Social Values
IDENTIFIERS *Latin America

ABSTRACT

Present educational problems and future challenges for education in Latin American countries are addressed. Descriptions are given of weaknesses and strengths in primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education. It is noted that illiteracy is a grave problem pervading both educational and social systems, and that there is a lack of integration between cultural policies and education, as well as a lack of adjustment of education to community needs . The need to tie education and employment is emphasized. It is stressed that teachers in Latin America must make governments, public leaders, and the press realize the importance of education to the transformation of society. Study of new forms of educational administration is recommended to make the administration more functional and to prevent suppression of essential communication among teachers, administrators, and students. The importance of preparing Latin American children for life, the need for communication, and the need for primacy of educational strategies over political strategies for educational improvement, are discussed. (JD)

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CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOR LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION

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Paper presented at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (30th, Washington, DC, July 11-15, 1983)

SP 022 845

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CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY FOR LATIN AMERICAN EDUCATION

The story of Latin America is often told in terms of the drama of the Spanish and Portuguese Conquest, the wars for independence, and the rise and fall of dictatorships. Many writers have often stressed only sensational events and personalities, and this method has tended to promote the notion that all is politics and military and civilian conflicts in Latin America.

But the liberators with their fights and success for independence brought with them men and ideas with the purpose of achieving for our peoples popular sovereignty through education. Since then, throughout the 19th. century the national systems of education were established. In Spanish America two great educators, Sarmiento and Bello stand out as the champions of both primary or common education and higher education. We must assert in this opportunity that Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, who became President of Argentina, and José Pedro Varela, the founder of common primary education in Uruguay, both took inspiration on the work of Horace Mann, the great American educator. On the other hand, Andrés Bello, the Venezuelan exiled in Chile, founded the University of Chile in 1842 and from it, following Napoleon's system, undertook leadership of education in all its levels. But his foremost work was dedicated to higher education.

In Brazil in 1892 they passed the law organizing the public teaching. But since 1920 great educators like Lorenzo Filho, Anisio Teixeira, Fernando Azevedo and others introduced the main features of educational renewal, inspired in the thinking of the European educators. A reaction against formal schooling was headed in Brazil by Paulo Freire.

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Throughout all these years, Latin America has fought to overcome mainly two evils: illiteracy and lack of generalization of the primary school for all children. Lately, education for development became a main objective of Latin American educational efforts. An official of the Organization of American States has reported not long ago that 70 million Latin Americans do not receive the benefits of education. Socially, it is considered that the high and middle sectors, mainly urban, controlled culture and its means of communication. The rest of the population, living under different geographical and linguistic conditions, did not enjoy as fully the advantages of a good education.

Obviously, according to Rama, a UNESCO expert who has made a study of education in Latin America up to 1975, not all the countries in our region shared those elements to the same extent. The availability of natural resources, the supply of labor, etc., led to different national conditions. The different nature of national experiences has increased notably in the last quarter of the century, due to the adjustment of the countries to the changes introduced in the centers of international power, their own traditions and geographic and social realities.

The social structure of the region has gone through important changes if we compare the situation existing before the beginning of industrialization. One may note a significant growth of urban population and that has raised the need for increasing the basic social services, such as education and health, mainly.

The notable progress made in the last quarter of the century in the areas of literacy and primary education could be observed in the adult population as a whole, but it is more significant among youth. In the population between 15 and 19 years of age while in 1960 one out of four was illiterate, in 1970 it is one out of six. As far as primary education is concerned, the average rate was in the same period 70.7%, ten years later it increased to 86,5%. In this last decade the percentages of both literacy and primary schooling have notably increased.

However, we must remember always that there are differences in the countries individually concerned. While some countries have practically eliminated illiteracy among the youth, others still have rates of more than 40%.

The significant growth of primary education has, however, some drawbacks, mainly the high percentage of drop outs, of those students unable to complete primary compulsory education. Statistics of the Organization of American States reports that only students of 9, 10 and 11 years of age are being retained, while after that age up to 14 years of age a substantial school desertion is produced. In other cases, students who have worked in their younger years, particularly in the rural sections of the region, enter primary schools at a later age.

Professor Rama, whom I have mentioned before, states that as far as the individual countries are concerned, out of students enrolled in first grade only the following reached the 6th. grade of primary education: 14 in Brazil, 19 in Nicaragua, 21 in the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Guatemala, 30 in Paraguay, 32 in Colombia, 38 in Perú, 42 in Ecuador, 53 in Argentina, 54 in Venezuela, 60 in Panamá, 61 in Bolivia, 64 in Uruguay, 76 in Costa Rica. He also observes that in those countries where education was in the hands of social agents not linked with the state like religious institutions, labor unions and other private concerns in the world, the process of achieving universal literacy was promoted, while in the case where literacy was almost exclusively dependent on the state, the progress was slow.

Not only budgetary limitations but also lack of the ability of the various social sectors to exert political pressure has caused the slowness of the progress of education in the Latin American countries. Political pressure in Cuba, for example, has caused the tremendous strides which this country has made in the last twenty years.

The need for achieving national integration has been a great force in the promotion of education and particularly for the elimination of illiteracy.

The higher rates of illiteracy, according to statistical data, as well as low primary school ratios, are linked with weak indicators of urbanization. The difficulties of the rural environment to solve the problems of education, such as population dispersion, geographical barriers, low levels of income, etc., are coupled with the difficulties resulting from the barriers of linguistic and different cultural standards. The isolation of these communities during four centuries shows the limitations of the cultural process, unable to incorporate this population into the larger oocidental society. In Perú, 40% of the labor force of the country work in the rural places and produce only 13% of the gross national product. It is in these places where more extreme poverty is found.

Rural education in Latin America is not well adapted to the human and social conditions of the people in general, we can fairly say. With the exception of some interesting experiences, like the nuclear schools in Bolivia and Perú, the rural schools are organized mainly in the same way that the urban schools and do not serve well the needs of their communities, nor do they attend adequately the education of adults.

This situation accounts for the fact that rural people, particularly the young, tend to migrate to the urban centers, a constant trend for several decades. The land reform in many places did not create the conditions to attract people to agricultural endeavours. However, the opportunities for barely qualified labor which was utilized during the first stages of industrialization, are no longer adequate. It is reported that around the middle of the decade 1950-1960, the process of industrial expansion became characterized by capital intensity and low demand for labor. The alternatives under these circumstances for employment among the educationally backward sectors have been reduced practically to self-employment and what has been called under-employment.

Among sociologists and educators in Latin America there is an increasing trend to emphasize the indigenous cultural values, to work for a Latin American identity. Various studies conducted in bilingual and monolingual conditions have stressed the importance of linguistic interaction to insure the effectiveness of education. An explanation of a somewhat low level of the quality of learning

may be due to the use of a language different from the one the students in the rural places know and utilize.

Secondary education has experienced a proportional increase in the number of students in the several countries of the region during the last two decades. Even the countries less developed in primary education are making extraordinary efforts to expand secondary education and foreign educators may find what has been called a stratified educational system, which, while it can not provide for all its children a basic primary education, it offers possibilities of a secondary education to those who finish primary education.

The promotion of the educational expansion at that level diminished pressures on the needs for employment, created expectations of social mobility through education and eliminated problems of unrest; but analysts point out that it has not been followed by processes of distribution of income and power. The lack of a reasonable connection between education and work and the interest of many students to further higher studies has put undesirable pressure on the universities, unable to obtain necessary funds for higher education needs.

Mass education and the change of objectives of this level of education with emphasis on its social functions and new situations, produced many reform movements during the last decade. They mainly had to do with the search for the national identities of the countries, the need for technical training to produce the human resources needed for industrial expansion and the new positions of leadership in the economic and administrative world of work.

The secondary, technical education with a terminal character has had some problems, due to the cost of the necessary equipment for implementation and also the aspirations of Latin American youth for social mobility in countries where education offers one of a few opportunities to move up in the social structure. It must be said, however, that a more fair conception of manual work is evolving in our countries.

The expansion of higher education in Latin America has been significant in the last twenty years, not only in enrollment but also in the ratio of the cooresponding age group which is enrolled, and in the sector

of the population which it serves.The demands are greater than the opportunities that may be offered. Quantitative expansion was not simply the consequence of a police outlined by the university itself, but the result of the economic growth and changes in the structure of society.

It is interesting to point out that part of that growth is channelled toward careers which particularly reflect the role of women. One of these careers which has shown a remarkable dynamism in recent years is the education of teachers, although women accede practically to all professions.

As some authors have pointed out, the increasing demands on the Latin American university have caused deterioration of the academic and scientific quality of college work. This exagerated university enrollment has produced in turn maladjustments in the social system, political restlessness and radical positions in politics of many Latin American young students, particularly in the national universities.

As far as private initiative in higher education is concerned, its contribution is generally positive. Better served in many cases by good teachers, with more definite goals in mind and generally specialized in newer types of professions, like administration, economics, sciences of communication, etc., these institutions offer in general a good quality of training. On the other hand, higher education has been the channel for access to the sector of the labor market of more relative expansion and better income.

As the Unesco Institute of Education of Hamburg states, in the last 25 years a considerable part of the Latin American population has overcome illiteracy, and increasing numbers of young people are acceding to the several levels of the educational system.

In reference to the cultural model it is important to state that there is no adequate correlation between education and socially recognized status. As far as the preparation of teachers are concerned, the expansion of the system has not, however, provided teachers with the good salaries they deserve, nor there is a really just appreciation of their most important social function.

The lack of a better educational planning has caused that many of

the students leaving either secondary or higher education have turned to different kinds of occupations with little opportunities to use their skills or education. This insatisfaction and the difficulties encountered in the social structure along with unjust social conditions in many places may explain in some way the social radicalism of many Latin American youth.

In view of the realities just outlined briefly, what are, then, the challenges of education in Latin America for the 21st. century? I believe that first of all we must provide an education closely related to the cultural, social, moral and religious values of our countries. An education without values, as we know, is a dead education. We witness often in our peoples, particularly in the rural sections of the region, adults and children untouched by the school in their minds and hearts, as if they were rebellious against the imposition of ways and content of teaching too far removed from their own culture, which makes them unable to express their feelings and deep desires along with their creativity.

For this reason it is pertinent to say that the cultural policies of our countries must be incorporated - in a more successful way - in the curriculum and methods of teaching in our schools. With the help of anthrologists and sociologists we must study more deeply the ways to do this. A rural education is not the same as an urban education.

Along with this suggestion, it is important to point out that there may be an effective identification of the school with the needs of our communities. We must not only teach but be taught by the lessons of history and sociology in order to make education really functional.

To do away with illiteracy in our countries is a definite goal which must be reached. To possess the essential elements of culture is a human right to be achieved as soon as possible. Much is being done in this respect.

Another challenge of Latin American education is to tie better education and work. Work, as an expression of self-realization, says the Document of the Reform of Education in Perú, is not only contained within the humanistic concepts..but it also determines the shape of a new society.

There must be an education in work and for work. As the Director General of UNESCO says:"....The harmonizing of education and work is of great importance in the world: the fundamental principle of integration of intellectual and manual activities not at the secondary level but at the primary level".

It is necessary to convince our governments of the essential role of education, so that this conviction must be translated in the increasing funds allocated for education in the national budgets. Great efforts must be done by the society in general to take education at heart, and to give it the revolutionary role to transform the social conditions.

Another important way in which it is possible to promote the cause of education in Latin America is by tying in the plans for social and economic development with the objectives of education, as it is being done in many of our countries. Education should have a high priority in those plans to show our belief in education. An agricultural or industrial plan must be considered as important as the work of the schools.

The efforts for regional integration and international cooperation in general must be further promoted, in the educational plans as well as in other development plans.

Local governments and federal or national governments are being made responsible in educational tasks. This cooperation must be strengthened particularly in the fields of supervision, school building and maintenance, and also in the important work of tying in the school and the communities.

I think it is necessary to look for new forms of educational administration so that schools may be well organized but they should not suppress the essential communication which must exist between teachers, and administrators, and students. At times there is talk of too much burocracy in school administration.

And now a word for the children of Latin America. The children's condition, within an adequate policy of human resources, constitute a major responsibility for all governments, citizens and teachers.

UNICEF reports that "the need for an intense investment of long-term development capital in the present decade in order to prepare an adequate base for future economic development is generally agreed to...but little account is generally taken of the importance of investing in the rising generation itself, the generation that must acquire the skills, attitudes and knowledge to use these capital goods. Also, there are too many children desolate and nutritionally deficient in some of the major cities of Latin America.

Children, as has been said, need both protection and preparation for life. They must have the means to survive, and we must reduce infantile mortality. Also, it is necessary to improve and extend the school services of preschool children and to control endemic diseases. It is also required to generalize the establishment of day-care centers for the children of working mothers. We must educate children for happiness and security.

I would like also to emphasize what I said briefly before, using the words of the eminent Chilean professor, Juan Gómez Millas, to the effect that "Latin America is an incommunicated, isolated continent. After the wars of independence, the union of the revolutionary groups disappeared and there was distrust that did away with efforts for integration of the new republics. During the 19th. century, very few Latin American intellectuals crossed the barriers of their own countries. Fortunately, later this situation has changed with the experience of an increasing Latin American participation in the world". Now new efforts of integration are being made not only in economic and social affairs but also in education. But much more needs to be done.

As we know, great problems affect Latin American minorities not yet incorporated to the values of Western culture, urban-rural imbalance, lack of a more homogeneous culture, economic under-development, political unrest, a certain degree of inefficiency in administration. We believe that there are two ways to tackle these problems: through politics and through education, or perhaps it is more accurate to say with politics and education. Or better, no real education is such in these times and in the future if it is not democratic and does not prepare for peace, the problem of our time.

I would like to finish by paying ~~xx~~ a homage to this great country, the U.S.where many of us have studied and acquired the ability to ~~xxxx~~ think and believe in education. In the words of a great American, Ralph Waldo Emerson we can say:"Let us make our education brave and preventive. ...We shall one day learn to supersede politics by education. What we call our root-and-branch reforms...is only medicating the symptoms. We must begin higher up, namely ~~in~~ Education".

Dr. María Marta Pajuelo, PERU.

APPENDIX

Indicators of the socio-economic and educational situation in Latin America

Table 1. Income and Urbanization

	GNP/INHAB (US$ 1970)			Urban Population Percentages [a]		
	1950	1960	1975	1950	1960	1975
Argentina	817.3	912	1,320	51.7	59.0	69.8
Bolivia	213.3	192	299	19.7	22.9	29.4
Brasil	231.6	331	603	21.1	28.2	45.0
Colombia	370.0	425	587	21.0	32.5	47.8
Costa Rica	343.6	474	764	21.2	23.0	27.6
Cuba	...	...	...	35.2	38.9	43.4
Chile	576.4	679	717	38.7	50.6	66.1
Ecuador	246.9	297	447	17.7	25.9	35.9
El Salvador	265.1	319	430	12.5	17.3	21.6
Guatemala	292.7	322	471	10.3	14.3	16.3
Haiti	118.6	118	109	4.7	7.5	14.5
Honduras	232.2	250	275	6.8	11.2	21.1
Mexico	485.8	627	997	24.9	28.9	38.7
Nicaragua	215.2	289	453	14.2	21.2	35.2
Panama	458.5	549	967	23.5	33.1	42.9
Paraguay	305.3	294	425	15.5	15.8	23.2
Peru	312.8	407	587	18.2	28.3	44.6
Dominican Republic	230.4	294	476	10.3	18.7	36.9
Uruguay	829.0	875	877	45.5	59.4	64.7
Venezuela	653.0	918	1,276	30.9	46.1	63.7

Source: CEPAL, Indicadores del desarrollo económico y social en América Latina, 1976.

a) Cities of 20,000 inhabitants or more.

Table 2. Gross Enrolment Ratios in Twenty Countries of Latin America

	Primary education			Secondary education			Higher education		
	1950	1960[a]	1975[a]	1950	1960[a]	1975[a]	1950	1960	1975
Argentina	94.1	98.3	98.1	10.4	27.0	50.5	5.2	11.3	28.0
Bolivia	35.0	53.8	92.9	4.9	9.9	18.0	1.6	3.6	5.9
Brasil	39.3	59.7	85.5	5.7	9.5	19.6	0.9	1.5	9.4
Colombia	36.0	54.8	88.5	3.9	10.2	20.1	0.9	1.7	8.4
Costa Rica	61.4	81.9	91.7	5.9	16.2	39.5	1.3	4.8	18.5
Cuba	66.2	94.5	107.0	4.7	12.3	27.4	...	3.3	9.0
Chile	74.0	88.7	90.0	10.7	21.5	47.2	1.6	4.0	16.2
Dominican Rep.	53.5	82.0	94.4	1.7	11.6	25.5	0.9	1.5	5.7
Ecuador	56.7	72.6	93.7	4.4	10.6	27.5	1.3	2.6	8.3
El Salvador	61.1	66.7	93.4	2.9	9.6	19.1	0.6	1.1	...
Guatemala	27.7	39.9	53.3	2.4	4.8	10.1	0.7	1.0	4.1
Haití	19.0	30.8	35.2	1.0	3.8[b]	5.0[b]	0.2	0.5	0.5
Honduras	28.1	56.9	73.4	0.6	5.7	11.9	0.6	1.1	4.4
Mexico	53.0	70.1	98.5	2.7	10.0	30.2	1.6	2.6	9.6
Nicaragua	38.5	48.7	71.4	2.7	5.4	19.3	0.7	1.2	6.7
Panama	76.0	80.5	106.9	9.2	25.0	48.4	1.9	4.6	18.3
Paraguay	74.3	84.7	86.4	1.5	9.4	17.7	1.2	2.3	4.8
Perú	66.8	72.5	95.2	6.4	13.5	33.9	2.1	3.6	22.8
Uruguay	89.8	93.8	90.6	17.0	30.5	62.4	5.7	7.7	15.0
Venezuela	51.1	83.5	84.5	3.0	17.7	31.9	1.3	4.3	19.8

Source: For 1950 UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook 1963, (Ages: 7-13 primary education, 14-19 secondary education). For 1960 and 1975: OREU, UNESCO and Statistical Yearbook 1976, for enrolment data. CELADE, Estimaciones de Población, para los tramos de edad. (Ages 6-12 primary education, 13-19 secondary education and 20-24 higher education).

a) Courses from 1st to 6th are considered as primary education and from 7th to 12th as secondary education.

b) Data from UNESCO ... source quoted for 1950.

Table 3. Incidence of Illiteracy

	Illiteracy 15 years and above			Illiteracy 15-19 years		
	1950	1960	1970	1950	1960	1970
Argentina	14.0	8.6	7.4	8.3	5.0	4.1
Bolivia	...	...	...	57.3	....	...
Brazil	51.0	39.4	33.6	47.2	33.4	24.3
Colombia	38.0	27.1	19.1	31.4	17.4	11.0
Costa Rica	21.0	15.6	11.6	18.4	8.6	4.0
Cuba	...	...	...	22.5	...	...
Chile	20.0	16.4	15.2	13.9	9.4	4.0
Dominican Republic	57.0	35.5	32.8	46.7	17.4	22.1
Ecuador	44.0	32.5	...	34.7	20.2	12.7
El Salvador	61.0	51.0	43.1	55.6	39.3	26.6
Guatemala	71.0	62.0	53.8	68.0	56.7	43.6
Haiti	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras	65.0	55.0	...	64.8	45.7	25.0
Mexico	43.0	34.6	25.8	...	25.9	15.0
Nicaragua	...	...	...	61.4	44.9	33.4
Panama	30.0	23.3	20.6	20.4	12.7	10.8
Paraguay	34.0	25.4	19.8	22.7	13.2	8.8
Peru	...	38.9	27.2	42.5	26.2	11.5
Uruguay	...	9.5	6.1	...	2.3	1.4
Venezuela	...	...	...	42.6	25.3	...

Source: National census and OREALC, UNESCO for illiteracy data CELADE, Estimaciones de población, para los tramos de edad.

Table 4. Indication of Educational Content

	Enrolment 6th grade as % population aged 12 years 1/			General education as % total enrolment in secondary education 2/ a/			Technical enrolment as % of total university enrolment 3/ b/		
	1960	1970	1975	1960	1970	1975	1960	1970	1975
Argentina	71.9	80.6	89.7	25.6	41.1	36.8	20.1	25.8	24.5 c/
Bolivia	34.9	34.7	53.5	83.4	84.7	87.1	20.2	20.8	15.2
Brazil	13.5	34.3	52.0	73.7	74.8	75.9	18.1	20.5	23.7 c/
Colombia	27.4	35.8	64.9	57.6	71.4	80.1	37.4	27.5	25.1
Costa Rica	40.7	79.4	92.6	74.1	92.2	95.9	5.4	7.6	7.6 c/
Cuba	51.9	...	83.0	73.4	74.0	77.0	27.9	43.1	39.3 c/
Chile	80.2	88.0	101.3	70.9	67.0	63.5	29.3	36.2	30.8
Ecuador	36.3	60.4	51.9	60.0	63.1	84.2	28.7	27.3	17.6 d/
El Salvador	30.5	48.5	52.5	60.7	80.9	69.6	29.5	14.3	27.6 c/
Guatemala	...	22.6	27.6	81.2	75.0	75.0	23.3	21.8	23.8
Honduras	20.9	40.2	40.8	63.8	73.9	75.8	11.4	24.0	26.4 c/
Mexico	37.2	63.7	91.9	54.6	71.7	70.3	32.2	33.9	24.3 c/
Nicaragua	17.1	34.3	40.6	60.2	87.9	91.4	29.3	19.8	14.5 c/
Panama	66.4	73.0	80.5	68.8	65.0	66.7	25.4	10.5	21.4 e/
Paraguay	32.4	50.0	55.1	62.6	87.4	92.6	18.3	18.9	21.5 e/
Peru	...	65.9	72.6	67.8	81.2	74.3	23.6	16.2	27.5
Dominican Republic	...	35.8	51.9	55.5	95.9	96.3	21.7	14.3	14.8 c/
Uruguay	68.6	82.9	97.9	65.5	75.8	76.7	8.6	15.0	18.0
Venezuela	46.1	63.7	69.6	58.1	63.9	63.9	23.5	23.8	25.9

Source:

1) OREU, UNESCO and Statistical Yearbook 1976, for data on enrolment. CELADE, Estimaciones de población, para datos de población por edad.

2) Prepared on the basis of data from UNESCO, Evolución y Situación actual de la educación en América Latina, OREU, Ed. Santillana, Santiago, Chile, 1976.

3) Statistical Yearbook 1976, UNESCO.

a) General education covers teacher education as well as commercial and technical.

b) Technical enrolment covers Engineering, Natural and Exact Sciences and Agronomy

c) 1974

d) 1975

e) 1974

Table 5. Participation of women in Education

	Percentage Women Secondary education			Percentage Women Higher education		
	1960	1970	1975	1960	1970	1975
Argentina	51.4	52.6	52.0	32.1	45.1	45.1
Bolivia	40.2	42.1	43.6	...	...	...
Brazil	47.1	50.5	...	28.1	47.3	45.6
Colombia	65.9	48.8	48.2	18.8	24.5	...
Costa Rica	46.0	49.0	51.6	44.1	43.5	...
Cuba	52.6	51.4	46.1	38.4	39.3	35.9
Chile	51.6	53.1	53.2	38.5	38.4	35.2
Ecuador	42.3	48.5	46.0	18.6	31.8	31.2
El Salvador	46.5	48.7	44.7	20.3	29.9	30.0
Guatemala	43.3	41.3	41.6	...	23.1	22.8
Honduras	43.0	44.9	...	14.5	32.8	33.0
Mexico	37.8	39.7	38.0	17.5	18.5	...
Nicaragua	38.8	47.4	48.1	21.9	33.9	33.6
Panama	53.0	52.2	51.2	41.5	46.0	51.2
Paraguay	50.0	50.0	49.3	30.9	42.1	...
Peru	38.0	41.2	42.5	20.5	32.6	32.1
Dominican Republic	56.9	50.0	43.3	24.4	42.4	46.0
Uruguay	42.1	54.5	54.0	...	45.2	43.8
Venezuela	46.3	48.8	52.5	31.0	39.7	...

Source: Prepared on the basis of data from UNESCO, Evolución y Situación actual de la Educación en América Latina, OREU, Ed. Santillana, Santiago, Chile, 1976.